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FOR UNDERSECRETARY SISCO FROM AMBASSDOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL AND THE VATICAN

REF: STATE 199682

SUMMARY: ARCHBISHOP CASSAROLI TOLD SARROS AUGUST 27 THAT HE SHARED SECRETARY'S PREOCCUPATION WITH PORTUGAL AND WAS GLAD SECRETARY DECIDED ON PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENTS THERE. WITH REGARD TO VATICAN'S PRECEPTION OF PORTUGUESE EVENTS, HE EXPRESSED CERTAIN "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" AND PROMISED A MORE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK AFTER FURTHER REFLECTION ON SUBJECT OF WHAT ROLE CHURCH CAN PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO MODERATE EVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL.

1. PURSUANT TO INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL SARROS GAVE VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER" CASSAROLI SECRETARY'S VIEWS ON PORTUGAL, UNDERLING (AFTER PROVIDING COPY OF SPEECH) THAT BIRMINGHAM SPEECH OF AUGUST 14 ACCURATELY REFLECTED GROWING US CONCERN OVER SITUATION. HE ALSO CITED OVER-NIGHT ITALIAN PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING THE CURRENT DANGEROUS GOVERNMENTAL IMPASSE IN PORTUGAL. SARROS THEN ASKED MONSIGNOR CASSAROLI FOR DESCRIPTION OF VATICAN'S PERCEPTION OF PORTUGUESE SITUATION AND WHAT ROLE CHURCH BELIEVED IT CAN PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO

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MODERATE EVOLUTION THERE.

2. CASSAROLI PREFACED HIS REPLY BY STATING THAT HE HAD SEVERAL "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" WHICH WOULD BE PASSED ON TO THE SECRETARY BUT THAT HE WOULD WANT TO REFLECT FURTHER ON THE TWO QUESTIONS POSED AND PUT HIS THOUGHTS ON A MORE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK. HE PROMISED TO PROVIDE THIS IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

3. VATICAN PERCEPTIONS: CASSAROLI SAID THAT VATICAN SHARED US PREOCCUPATION WITH EVOLVING PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION. IN EXPRESSING STRONG APPROVAL OF SECRETARY'S PUBLIC POSTURE REGARDING SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN PORTUGAL, HE MENTIONED VATICAN PERPLEXITY AT SOVIET TOLERANCE OF EFFORTS BY PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS TO OVERTURN ELECTORAL RESULTS. HE OPINED THAT LOGICALLY COMMUNIST EFFORTS TO AFFECT PORTUGUESE EQUILIBRIUM ARE CONTRARY TO PROFESSED SOVIET COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN DETENTE. THIS HE SAID WAS PARTICULARLY UPSETTING TO PORTUGUESE EPISCOPATE WHICH ALSO ASSUMED SOVIET OPERATIONAL (AS DISTINCT FROM RHETORICAL) RESTRAINT OVER PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS.

4. CHURCH ROLE: THE EPISCOPATE HE SAID HAS CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL POWER BUT HAS BEEN CAREFUL IN WAY OF EXERCISING IT BECAUSE OF THREE REASONS: LACK OF ORGANIZATION AT POLITICAL LEVEL; FEAR OF FAR-LEFTIST REPRISALS, AND GENERALIZED SELF-RESTRAINT ON DIRECT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THE PORTUGUESE CHURCH HAS AVOIDED PUBLIC ASSOCIATION WITH SPECIFIC EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES. IT HAS, HOWEVER, MADE GENERALIZED CALLS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A PLURALIST DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IN PORTUGAL. IT HAS ALSO MAINTAINED (UNIDENTIFIED) CONTACTS WITH AFM. IN THE NORTH, HE SAID, THE CHURCH ROLE HAS BEEN MORE VISIBLE AND MORE DIRECT. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE CITED EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES OF ARCHBISHOP DA SILVA OF BRAGA, AND STATED THAT ARCHBISHOP OF OPORTO COULD PROBABLY BE MORE EFFICACIOUS MOBILIZER OF PUBLIC OPINION BECAUSE OF THIS PUBLIC BACKGROUND AS SALAZAR OPPONENT.

COMMENT: CASSAROLI WHILE SHARING US PREOCCUPATION DID NOT EXPRESS ALARM AT CURRENT POLITICAL IMPASSE IN PORTUGAL. HE
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WAS EAGER IN TACKLING SUBJECT AND OBVIOUSLY GRATEFUL AT US INITIATIVE IN ASKING FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS. HIS RELUCTANCE TO GO BEYOND GIVING HIS "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" IS EXPLICABLE BY FACT THAT CASSAROLI RETURNED FROM SEVERAL WEEKS LEAVE ONLY ON MONDAY, AUGUST 25, AND HE MAY THEREFORE NOT HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETELY BRIEF HIMSELF. AN INDICATION OF THIS WAS HIS COMMENT THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS

STAFF TO RECALL THE PAPAL NUNCIO FROM PORTUGAL IN ORDER
TO PROVIDE VATICAN WITH CURRENT FIRST-HAND INFORMATION
BUT THAT HE HAD NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASCERTAIN AS
YET THE STATUS OF THE NUNCIO'S PLANS. FURTHERMORE, GIVEN
THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE TWO QUESTIONS POSED HE
MAY WISH TO CONSULT POPE PAUL AND ARCHBISHOP BENELLI,
THE SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE. FROM OUR VATICAN
POINT CASSAROLI'S PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS INDICATE THAT HE
BELIEVES THAT CHURCH'S ROLE CAN BE MORE ASSERTIVE AND
EFFICACIOUS WHEN THE LAST CHIPS NEED TO BE PLAYED OUT IN
PORTUGAL. ACCORDINGLY IT WOULD SEEM USEFUL FOR AMBASSADOR
LODGE TO PURSUE DIALOGUE DURING HIS TRIP TO ROME
SEPTEMBER 11-20. VOLPE

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